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ACTION NEA-10

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AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
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SUBJECT: RABIN ON ISRAELI STRATEGY AND NEGOTIATIONS WITH
EGYPT

1. SUMMARY: IN LENGTHY DEC 3 INTERVIEW WITH HAARETZ
EDITOR MARCUS, PRIMIN RABIN HAS OUTLINED HIS CURRENT VIEWS
ON A) GENERAL STRATEGIC SITUATION CONFRONTING ISRAELI IN YEARS
AHEAD AND B) POSSIBLE ELEMENTS IN ISRAELI APPROACH TO NEXT
STEP OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH EGYPT. STRESSING IMPORTANCE OF
INTERVIEW, HAARETZ, IN ADDITION TO CARRYING TEXT OF INTERVIEW
ON EDITORIAL PAGE, GIVES FRONTPAGE COVERAGE TO SUMMARY OF
RABIN'S VIEWS. END SUMMARY.

2. DISCUSSING ISRAEL'S OVERALL STRATEGIC SITUATION, RABIN TOLD
MARCUS THAT ISRAEL MUST GAIN TIME AND FIND A WAY TO GET
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THROUGH THE NEXT SIX OR SEVEN YEARS INPEACE IN ORDER TO ALLOW THE

WESTERN COUNTRIES TO FREE THEMSELVES FROM DEPENDENCY ON ARAB OIL.

3. ISRAEL ALSO MUST TRY TO ISOLATE SYRIA AND THUS BLOCK THE TENDENCY OF SYRIAN POLICY WHICH IS TO DRAW THE REGION INTO A NEW WAR-- THIS TIME ON THREE FRONTS-- AGAINST ISRAEL. IF NEW WAR IN 1975 CANNOT BE AVOIDED, IT IS IN ISRAEL'S INTEREST THAT IT BE CONFINED TO NORTHERN FRONT AGAINST SYRIA.

4. RABIN SAID THAT ISRAEL COULD CONTRIBUTE TO ACHIEVING THIS GOAL IN PART BY PREVENTING EGYPT FROM COMING AGAIN UNDER DIRECT SOVIET INFLUENCE AND BY SUPPORTING AMERICAN INITIATIVES IN THE REGION.

5. RABIN SAID THAT IN WEEKS AHEAD GOI WILL FACE DIFFICULT DILEMMA OF HOW TO ACHIEVE THESE OBJECTIVES AT A REASONABLE COST. RABIN INDICATED TO MARCUS THAT, FOR PURPOSE OF GAINING TIME AND ISOLATING SYRIA, HE WOULD NOT NECESSARILY REJECT NEGOTIATING APPROACH OF MILITARY AGREEMENTS PROVIDED THEY ALSO INCLUDED POLITICAL COMMITMENTS-- I.E, CONCEALED COMMITMENTS TO USG.

6. ON LINKAGE BETWEEN POLITICAL AND MILITARY ELEMENTS, MARCUS PARAPHRASES RABIN'S VIEWS AS FOLLOWS: "AND THEREFORE, WHAT IS THE PRICE WHICH WE WILL HAVE TO PAY? WE WILL BE ASKED TO ENTER INTO AN ADDITIONAL MILITARY AGREEMENT WITH EGYPT. IN THIS MANNER EGYPT WANTS TO GET AROUND THE RABAT DECISIONS. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT THERE WILL NOT BE POLITICAL ELEMENTS IN THIS KIND OF AGREEMENT.

BUT THEY WILL BE CONCEALED, IE, THEY WILL BE GIVEN TO THE AMERICANS AND NOT TO US. HOW DID THE EGYPTIANS MEASURE UP TO THE COMMITMENTS WHICH THEY GAVE TO THE AMERICANS IN THE DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT? THEY HONORED ALL OF THEM, RABIN EMPHASIZED. AS REGARDS THE OPENING OF THE SUEZ CANAL, THERE WAS NO COMMITMENT THAT IT WOULD BE OPENED BEFORE THERE WAS AN ADDITIONAL STAGE. OUR DILEMMA-- RABIN SAID-- IS WHETHER WE WILL STICK TO THE PRINCIPLE OF ONLY POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS. WILL WE REJECT A MILITARY SETTLEMENT WHICH INCLUDES CONCEALED POLITICAL ELEMENTS? IF OUR CONCEPTUAL APPROACH IS TO GAIN SEVERAL YEARS TIME, I WILL NOT SAY THAT I AM UNPREPARED TO GO DOWN THE PATH OF MILITARY AGREEMENTS."

7. ACCORDING TO MARCUS, RABIN IMPLIED THAT WITHIN FRAMEWORK OF SUCH SETTLEMENT ISRAEL COULD NOT BE EXPECTED TO WITHDRAW TO AN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EXTENT WHICH WOULD ENDANGER HER MILITARY CAPABILITY IN THE SINAI. THEREFORE, SUCH AN AGREEMENT WOULD HAVE TO INCLUDE THE FOUR FOLLOWING ELEMENTS: A) EGYPT WOULD NOT OCCUPY THE AREA EVACUATED BY ISRAEL, B) THE SINAI PASSES WOULD REMAIN IN ISRAELI HANDS; CONCESSIONS WOULD BE A LITTLE TO THE SOUTH, A LITTLE TO THE NORTH, BUT NOT IN THE CENTRAL REGION, C) THERE WOULD BE NO MOVEMENT IN THE FIELD BEFORE RENEWAL OF UN MANDATE (BY SYRIA AS WELL AS EGYPT) FOR AN ADDITIONAL PERIOD, D) AN ADDITIONAL

PERIOD FOR THE UN MANDATE WOULD HAVE TO BE SIGNIFICANTLY LONGER THAN THE PRESENT ONE.

8. RABIN DID NOT EXPLICITLY MENTION THE ISSUE OF NON-BELLIGERENCY DECLARATION, BUT HINTED INSTEAD THAT IN PRACTICE AFTER AN ADDITIONAL AGREEMENT EGYPT WOULD HAVE CONSIDERABLY LESS REASON TO START ANOTHER WAR AGAINST ISRAEL.

9. IN COURSE OF INTERVIEW, RABIN EXPRESSED OPTIMISM REGARDING ISRAELI-US RELATIONSHIP BUT ANTICIPATED AN "INCREASE OF TENSIONS" IN NEAR FUTURE IN CONNECTION WITH NEGOTIATIONS WITH EGYPT.

10. COMMENT: WHILE EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH SENIOR ISRAELI EDITOR IS FAR STEP FROM OFFICIAL FORMULATION OF NEGOTIATING POSITION, WE REGARD RABIN'S REMARKS AS CLEAR SIGN OF HIS INTENTION TO MAINTAIN PUBLICLY A FLEXIBLE AND PRAGMATIC APPROACH TO NEXT STAGE OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH EGYPT. THEY ALSO UNDERLINE ONCE MORE RABIN'S CONVICTION THAT EGYPTIAN FACTOR IS SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN PANOPLY OF ARAB-ISRAELI ISSUES.

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